

Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
Open Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

<https://dcfwi.zoom.us/j/88400272325?pwd=NzJkUUw4bzRLRVI1eE1acGR3K3Y4QT09>

Present: Emilie Amundson, John Ashley, Barbara Bales (designee), Joan Beck, Priya Bhatia, Jillian Clemens, Daria Hall, Kelly Matthews, Suzette Mayotte, Kathy Mullally, Lana Nenide, Duy Nguyen, Cailin O'Connor, Matricia Patterson, Kathy Paul (designee) Stephany Pruitt, Deborah Rathermel, Katie Roberts (designee), Ruth Schmidt, Dr. Jill Underly, Dea Wright

Excused: Salvador Carranza, Morna Foy, Peng Her, Kia Kjensrud, Jose Martinez (designee), Lupe Martinez, Jennie Mauer, Charlene Mouille, Mark Tyler

Call to Order & Welcome from Lieutenant Governor Sara Rodriguez

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Emilie Amundson introduced and welcomed Lieutenant Governor Sara Rodriguez. Lt. Gov. Rodriguez is a public health nurse by trade and helped to provide a better understanding of the opportunities available to serve the children and families of the state through this unique perspective. Lt. Gov. Rodriguez indicated that she would work to move the Governor's budget forward, keeping Wisconsin a place others want to come to and live.

Agenda Review and Approval of Minutes

- The meeting was called to order at 9:08 am by Duy Nguyen, Assistant State Superintendent, Department of Public Instruction (DPI).
- Duy asked for a motion to approve the December 14, 2022, council meeting minutes. Kelly Matthews made the motion to approve, and Barbara Bales seconded the motion. The council voted to approve the minutes.
- A review of the agenda was completed.
- Duy conducted a roll call of council members and asked that the participants share their name, organization, and role.

Co-Chair Welcome and Updates

- Secretary Amundson welcomed Priya Bhatia, the new Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) Administrator, to DCF and to the council. Priya provided a personal introduction and shared excitement in the ability to collaborate and learn from the other council members.
- Secretary Amundson spoke of Governor Evers' budget and highlighted the areas that align with the Council's 2022 recommendations and support additional early care and education opportunities.

- Emilie provided highlights from the Governor's Leadership Council on Early Years' February meeting, in which various state agencies shared their individual biennial budget requests and explained how these initiatives support young children and their families. <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/pdg/lcey>
- Emilie announced the Governor's declaration of 2023 as the Year of Mental Health and his intent to support DPI's Get Kids Ahead Initiative.
- State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly acknowledged the extreme pressure the educational system incurred over the last few years, referring to it as "actual trauma." She discussed the importance of crucial investments and increased support at the local levels to keep kids strong and successful.
- Dr. Underly briefly discussed the Wisconsin Head Start Association's annual conference and impressive attendance that reflected a lot of partner agencies interested to hear about Head Start accomplishments.

ECAC Budget Recommendations and 2023-2025 Biennial Budget Discussion

- DECE Administrator Priya Bhatia reviewed the Council's 2022 Budget Recommendations to the Governor, which included significant investments in early childhood educators and Child Care Counts funding, programs supporting the health and well-being of families (greater access to and sustainability of children's mental health services, the expansion of the Family Foundations Home Visiting program, and extended coverage of Medicaid postpartum services), and Wisconsin's Family Resource Centers. The ECAC 2022 Annual Report can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ecac>. Priya also reviewed the 2023-25 Executive Budget released by Governor Evers last month and compared it to the priorities set by the council. Priya highlighted additional early childhood budget requests. Focus was placed on creating a framework in which support was offered at different system levels (families, child care providers, and communities) and in which engagement from the private sector and local businesses was both encouraged and rewarded. Partner Up!, Wisconsin Shares, Child & Dependent Care Tax Credits, and other investment asks were named.
- Tom McCarthy, DPI, discussed the parallels between early child care and the public school system, indicating that they needed to be paired for success. He discussed a workforce crisis similar to that of child care and the need to recruit and retain quality educators. DPI's biggest priority is said to be an increase in predictable, reliable revenue growth. As with Child Care Counts, Covid relief funding in schools is set to expire in 2024. Additional funding is especially needed in special education and mental health services.
- Council members provided details and shared information regarding their advocacy efforts. Many agencies joined forces by attending listening sessions, hosting advocacy days, contacting legislators, providing resources, and speaking out.

ECAC Executive Order Re-Grounding

Duy Nguyen reviewed the founding Executive Order which created the ECAC in 2008--
https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/executive_orders/2003_jim_doyle/2008-269.pdf.

Background information was provided, membership restrictions were reviewed, and the required functions and activities of the Council were methodically examined. The review was performed for the purpose of reflection and to re-ground and support the vision of the ECAC and its work in 2023 and beyond. The presentation was followed by a discussion of the members and a brief survey to capture the functions in which the council would like to address more fully and how its members would like to engage. Some felt the council's viewpoint had broadened over time to include families in addition to children and to understand and include more services for children. Others suggested that clear, comprehensible data was needed to advocate and move forward. Further conversation is expected at the June ECAC Full Council Meeting. Survey results will be shared with further discussion.

Adjourn

- A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Kelly Matthews; Katie Roberts seconded the motion. The council voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 am.